Bio-Warfare

29. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that bio-warfare or bio-terrorism is the deliberate use of living organisms to kill people;

(b) if so, whether Government are also aware that economic policies based on trade liberalization and globalisation deliberately spread fatal and infectious diseases such as AIDS, TB and Malaria and by dismantling health and medical systems, they too become instruments of bio-terror; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a)Yes, Sir.

(b) Economic liberalization and globalisation is designed to enhance the inflow of scarce resource and provide an impetus to development through growth of domestic markets, opening of international market, access to new technology and improvement in production methods. All imported eatables are subjected to examinations in designated food laboratories as per the PFA Rules. On receipt of satisfactory report they are released by the Customs authorities for consumption.

(c) Question does not arise.

Impact of GMOs

30. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that since the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) have not existed in nature, their impact on the environment and on human health;

(b) whether Government are also aware that ignorance of the impact is being treated as proof of safety, which is totally unscientific approach; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) to (c) Genetic transformation can take place in nature but the probability of such transformation is extremely low. Moreover, the transformed host has to survive under natural conditions. It is usually extremely difficult for a transformed host to survive because it requires the most favourable condition

so that not only the transformed organism will express the transgene that it might have acquired but it would also have to keep intact its normal activities of survival machinery that has evolved over a very long period.

Indian system of regulation is transparent in dealing with genetically modified organisms. All experiments are to pass through a three tier regulatory process where there is vigilance from the Government at each stage to keep a watch on what is being developed or used locally. The three tier system comprise creation of an Institutional Biosafety Committee at the Institute/Company where research work is carried out or where transgenic materials are developed; the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation is a Central Committee housed at the Department of Biotechnology; while the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee which is the Statutory Body to deal with all aspects of genetically modified organisms and products thereof is in the Ministry of Environment & Forests. Wherever materials do not enter through the three tier system, the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 can act heavily on the offender as such acts are considered to be criminal in nature and they attract punitive actions.

Prevalence of AIDS/HIV

31. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently released report of U.N. puts India, besides Africa in the prevalence of AIDS/HIV;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the total number of people living in the country with HIV-AIDS, State-wise;

(d) the budget that Government have allocated for this deadly disease during the current year; and

(e) the programmes undertaken by the NACO for AIDS/HIV, patients?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

As per the analysis of HIV Sentinel Surveillance data 2000, it is estimated